

VZCZCXYZ0001
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHMO #2566 2391433
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 261433Z AUG 08
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9712
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHDX/MOSCOW POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 002566

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/26/2018
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PREF](#) [PINR](#) [RS](#) [GG](#)
SUBJECT: TFGG01: OSSETIAN IRREGULAR MILITIAS PRIMARILY
RESPONSIBLE FOR VIOLENCE AGAINST GEORGIAN MINORITY

REF: A. MOSCOW 2490
[1](#)B. STATE 90055

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Eric Rubin; reason 1.4 (d)

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: There have been numerous reports of violence against ethnic Georgians both in South Ossetia and around the town of Gori committed by "irregulars" -- unorganized militias who followed behind the Russian army into South Ossetia. A human rights activist who was in South Ossetia near the end of the fighting told us that any Chechens and Dagestanis fought as part of the Russian army and that militias responsible for the looting and possible atrocities against ethnic Georgians were either North or South Ossetians. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) At the outbreak of the fighting in South Ossetia there were anecdotal reports in the media of volunteers, most notably from North Ossetia and Dagestan, signing up to fight against the Georgian army (Ref. A). In addition, the media reported that the Eastern Battalion of former Chechen fighters led by Sulim Yamadayev and who reported to the Russian Ministry of Defense also took part in the fighting as volunteers. The media later reported that men from Chechnya and Dagestan died in the fighting. These reports were based on bodies being returned to Chechnya and Dagestan for burial after the fighting ended.

[1](#)3. (C) Tanya Lokshina, Senior Researcher in the Moscow office of Human Rights Watch, told us August 22 that although it was difficult to know for sure, she believed the looting and atrocities ascribed to the "irregulars" were carried out by either North or South Ossetians and not fighters from elsewhere in the North Caucasus. She said that she did not see a great number of irregulars from outside Ossetia, and that the men killed during the conflict and eventually buried in Chechnya and Dagestan were either in the Russian army or commanded by it. Lokshina supported the statement by her colleague Anna Niestat to reporters that no Georgian residents in South Ossetia reported serious misbehavior by Russian soldiers and said that, on the contrary, the Russian army had done a great deal to protect these Georgian villages from marauding paramilitaries. Both said that young males from North and South Ossetia fled to the woods to fight after the Georgians began to shell Tskhinvali on August 8.

Comment

[1](#)4. (SBU) It does not appear that the threatened flow of "irregulars" from Chechnya or Dagestan ever materialized. In an August 25 article, Novaya Gazeta reported that, on the contrary, hundreds of ethnic Chechen and Ingush soldiers resigned from military and law enforcement structures rather than "volunteer" to fight in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, even though it might cost them any chance at future government jobs or immunity from prosecution for previous acts.
BEYRLE